

**BLM Utah Resource Advisory Council Meeting Notes**  
**June 17-18, 2019**  
**Kanab High School**  
**59 E. Cowboy Way, Kanab, Utah 84741**

RAC members in attendance: Chad Baker, Joan Hayes, Callee Butcher, Clif Koontz, Rick Draney, Michael Small, Troy Forrest, Ralph Bohn, Tyler Thompson, Bill Cox and Frank White.

BLM employees in attendance: Ed Roberson, Abbie Jossie, Ikumi Doucette, Harry Barber, Brandon Johnson, Whit Bunting, Vicki Tyler, Sean Stewart, Jabe Beal, Matt Blocker, Joelle McCarthy, Sue Fivecoat, Graydon Bascom, Lola Bird, and Ryan Sutherland.

Members of the public in attendance: Nicole Croft, John Holland, Sherry Robinson, and Noel Poe, Grand Staircase-Escalante Partners; Morgan Drake, WCWCD; Phil Hanceford, The Wilderness Society; Brian Bremner, Garfield County; Shea Owens, PLPCO; James Berman; Mike Reid, UT/AZ ATV Club; Michelle Galaria; Joe Stewart; Tom Dillon; Marsha and Craig Tupper; Mark and Judy Habbeshaw; Barbara Andrews; Margaret Stone; Cris and Ed Shearer; Rich and Debra Csenge, Amazing Earthfest; Kirk Siegler, NPR; Kelly McCabe; Celia Sullivan; and Glenn Parrent.

**BLM Welcome and Statewide Updates**

Presenter: Ed Roberson, State Director

BLM Utah State Director Ed Roberson provided a welcome and overview to RAC members, discussed the importance of their roles and thanked them for their willingness to serve on the RAC.

The Code of Conduct was reviewed. Director Roberson asked the group to strive to reach consensus where possible.

The Utah RAC Charter was reviewed by the group. This charter was signed by the Secretary of the Interior in March 2018 and has been expanded to include emphasis on some of the recent Secretarial Orders. The RAC's objective is to help the BLM work on issues identified by the Designated Federal Officer. Recreation business plans and recreation fees are also included in the charter. The current charter will expire in March 2020.

The RAC currently has 12 members. Three additional members are needed to round out the 15-member council.

John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act of 2019 – Largely affects Emery County. As part of this Act, the BLM will conduct land exchanges with Utah School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration (SITLA). This Act established 17 wilderness areas, a national recreation area, a national monument, and a national conservation area. The BLM has completed the implementation strategy. Braden Sheppard, an employee on detail from the Governor's Public Land Policy Coordination Office (PLPCO), is currently the project manager.

Utah Test and Training Range (UTTR) – This act was passed two years ago. The BLM is two-thirds complete on a land exchange to remove inholdings from the UTTR boundaries.

Oil and Gas Lease Sales – The June oil and gas lease sale was a relatively small sale. The next lease sale will take place in September 2019 and will be a large sale.

Watershed Restoration Initiative – The BLM is conducting numerous projects statewide to improve land health and make it more productive. To date, 1.6 million acres of land have been treated across Utah.

Wild Horses and Burros – The wild horse and burro population in Utah exceeds the established appropriate management level by 300 percent. Wild horse populations double every four years. This is a difficult management issue. BLM wild horse staff are passionate about the animals as well as the resources. U.S. Senator Mitt Romney (R-UT) is scheduled to hold a hearing on wild horses and burros this fall. This is an issue that the RAC will be working on.

Greater Sage-Grouse Planning - Land use plans have been updated to be more consistent with the State of Utah plans. Plan amendments were completed in March 2019. The plans are currently being implemented. The plans are currently being litigated with the State of Utah as an intervenor.

Sevier Playa potash EIS - In August, the BLM will brief the Deputy Secretary on the Sevier Playa potash EIS currently underway in the Fillmore Field Office.

Cedar City Field Office Draft Resource Management Plan – This plan covers BLM land in Beaver and Iron Counties. The plan was put on hold while the sage-grouse plans were being completed. The draft plan will be released for public comment this fall. The comment period will run for 90 days.

Northern Transportation Route – The BLM received a proposal from UDOT and Washington County for a road along the southern border of the Red Cliffs National Conservation Area (NCA). If the road is built, other lands must be available for mitigation. There is tortoise habitat southwest of the NCA that could potentially be used as a mitigation option.

Lake Powell Pipeline – The BLM is reviewing the EIS and working with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission on this project.

### **Statewide Planning Updates**

Presenter: Abbie Jossie, Deputy State Director, Natural Resources

The Bears Ears Monument Advisory Committee provided recommendations on the Bears Ears Monument Management Plan. Once the Grand Staircase Monument Advisory Committee has a full quorum, they will be the group to provide recommendations on planning efforts for the Grand Staircase.

Jake Palma has been selected as the Bears Ears National Monument Manager. He will work out of Monticello Field Office. The BLM has a staffer working at Edge of the Cedars visitor center to provide information about the Bears Ears National Monument.

Travel management planning – The BLM was litigated on resource management plans. A settlement agreement with a remedy for travel management plans was reached. The BLM is working hard to stay on schedule and get the plans completed. There are 13-20 travel management plans to be completed over the next five years. The Fremont Gorge and Henry Mountains and San Rafael Desert travel management plans are due to be completed in November 2019. Decisions will be made on specific travel routes in these plans. The St. George Field Office is also working on a travel management plan.

**Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument (GSENM) and Kanab Escalante Planning Area (KEPA) Draft Resource Management Plans (RMP) and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)**

Presenters: Harry Barber, Acting Grand Staircase-Escalante Monument Manager; Brandon Johnson, Grand Staircase Planner; and Whit Bunting, Acting Kanab Field Office Manager.

The GSENM is important to the San Felipe, Acoma, Laguna, and the Bears Ears Inter-tribal Coalition. The BLM engages with Tribes on how they want to see public lands managed.

Cooperators on the GSENM plan include: Tribes, Counties, National Park Service, and PLPCO.

The planning area encompasses the original monument boundaries of approximately 1.86 million acres. Current GSENM lands that remain part of GSENM are included in three units and total 1,003,863 acres. Four RMPs will replace the current GSENM management plan from 2000. Four alternatives are being considered. The BLM's preferred alternative is Alternative D. It provides for the proper care and protection of monument objects and protects physical, biological, cultural, visual, and other resources to the extent required by existing statutes and regulations, while managing resources to allow for management flexibility. The final plans may draw from multiple alternatives. The plans are scheduled for release in late August or early September. Travel management planning will begin after RMPs are completed.

**Preferred Alternative D**

- Provides management flexibility for multiple uses.
- Allows vegetation treatments.
- Provides most diverse recreation opportunities.
- Allows larger groups than existing management plan.
- Allows mineral leasing in Kanab-Escalante Planning Area (KEPA) with moderate constraints.
- Includes analysis of three travel routes of importance to local communities.
- Identified an OHV open area.
- Includes two areas that are unavailable for casual collection due to fossil high yield.

**Travel management**

- Delineates planning area into Travel Management Areas for deferred travel management planning (TMP).
- Updates existing travel management decisions to open all designated routes to OHV travel.
- Analyzes three routes that were previously closed in GSENM proposed by Kane and Garfield Counties - Inchworm Arch road, V Road and Flag Point.

- Sets parameters for development of future TMPs, including consideration of county route networks and routes that existed prior to designation of GSENM.
- The Open area is Little Desert near Escalante and is 2,828 acres in size.

#### Recreation

- Removes existing management zones.
- Establishes a new Extensive Recreation Management Area (ERMA) and small Recreation Management Zones (RMZ) in areas with high visitation. Focusing on zones allows us to improve specific recreation areas.
- Increases opportunities for motorized access – plan currently says up 50 feet off of the road for ATVs and camping. No cross-country travel is allowed.
- Competitive events allowed by permit under preferred alternative. Recreation events include foot races, and horse events. Mechanized recreation events are within the range of consideration.
- Allows increased group sizes.

#### Minerals

- GSENM closed, subject to Valid Existing Rights (VER).
- Provides opportunities for mineral exploration, development, and reclamation in the KEPA.
- Mineral potential report projects 14 wells and one coal mine during the life of the plan – mineral potential report is included in the plan.
- Provides access to sand and gravel.
- Approximately 210,000 acres of the KEPA are within WSAs and are Congressionally closed to leasing under the Federal Onshore Oil and Gas Leasing Reform Act.
- Coal Unsuitability review conducted on 141,000 acres: Unsuitable: 75,076 acres, not unsuitable 66,097 acres.
- This plan does not allow mining to occur – provides broad guidelines. NEPA is conducted when specific projects are proposed.

#### Paleontology

- Manage paleontological resources in order to protect them and make them accessible to appropriate research and public enjoyment.
- Facilitate appropriate use and enjoyment of geological resources.
- Develop a Paleontological RMP for GSENM and certain KEPA lands with high potential for scientifically significant fossils.
- Prohibit casual collection in GSENM, except in identified open areas (Alt. D – 2 areas open).
- Allow casual collection in KEPA, except in identified closed areas (Alt. D – 2 areas closed).
- No commercial collection.

#### Livestock Grazing

- Alternatives and analysis are derived from non-published Livestock Grazing EIS.
- Alternatives range from a 23 percent reduction in AUMs and available acreage (Alt B), to increased available grazing including returning suspended AUMs (Alt D).
- No grazing alternative is considered but eliminated from detailed analysis.

- Preferred alternative allows range improvements that could increase forage and water for livestock and wildlife.
- Livestock analysis also includes Glen Canyon National Recreation Area (NRA) and other BLM lands.

Suspensions – closing areas when needed such as fire but no specific timeframe for closure.

#### **RAC guidance for recommendations to the BLM on Draft RMPs/EIS**

Recommendations from the RAC should:

- Focus on Alternative D or at least stay within the range of Alternatives A-D.
- Focus on specific management actions/resources of concern identified by the BLM or RAC due to limited time.
- Be limited to planning level decisions, not implementation level decisions.

#### **Initial feedback from the RAC**

- Feels the BLM has done a good job and is generally supportive of Alternative D. Doesn't feel that plans should be put on hold waiting for litigation to be settled.
- Little Desert RMZ – would like to see objectives for this area be more specific. Could make this area limited to designated routes.
- Travel management planning – set a target date for completion of travel management planning. This may help secure funding for the plan. This should come right on the heels of the RMP.
- Impacts on fire and fuels management – tier to the fire management plan.
- Alternative D allows more options for fuels management such as chaining and mastication.
- Fire suppression activities for GSENM and Kanab Field Office are based out of Cedar City.
- Fire can be used to help with vegetative treatments depending on goals for that specific area.
- Feels that the majority of fires are human-caused. Fire information is included in the Analysis of the Management Situation section of the plan.
- Expressed concern about protecting the monument objects and values.
- Feels that Alternative D provides the flexibility to consider various proposals. Best management practices would be used to protect monument objects and values. Make an effort to differentiate between GSENM and KEPA lands when recommending management prescriptions. KEPA lands now have more management flexibility. This plan is an umbrella. When projects are proposed, site-specific analysis takes place.
- Expressed that more time was needed to review the plans.
- Likes Alternative D which gives enough space/flexibility to make individual management decisions without a plan amendment.
- Likes Alternative D because it opens up a toolbox of management prescriptions. Ecological Site Descriptions – concern about management action #1055, 30 percent cover is a tough bar to reach.
- Impressed with work on the plan. Reword management action #1060 language on not authorizing water developments that will increase livestock numbers.
- How did the BLM come up with the projection of 14 wells and one coal mine during the life of the plan? The state geologist prepares a mineral potential report for the plan.

- What are moderate constraints? Make clearer when and how best management practices, exceptions, waivers, modifications, etc. would be applied.
- Under Alternative D, would site-specific NEPA occur? Site-specific NEPA would occur for proposed projects. The plan makes no specific mining decisions.
- Supports Alternative D and the flexibility that this alternative provides.

### **June 17 Public Comment Period**

#### **Phil Hanceford – The Wilderness Society**

- What is the status of the GSENM advisory committee and what role do they play?
- What is the status of the reorganization of the Kanab Field Office and GSENM?
- Monuments plans are in litigation with various groups – why is the BLM moving forward with planning?
- Not sure all alternatives protect monument objects.
- Red Cliffs NCA/Northern Corridor – his constituents oppose a Northern Corridor through the Red Cliffs NCA. This should not happen.

#### **Noel Poe – GSENM Partners**

- Monument reorganization – has it been approved? What is the timeline for approval?

#### **Brian Bremner – Garfield County Engineer and Public Lands Coordinator**

- Cooperating agency status – healthy discussions have taken place between local officials and the BLM. Not sure how some of the planning decisions were made. They do not agree with some of the decisions that have been made.
- Travel – the current plan does not provide opportunities for the public.
- Hole in the rock road – use has increased by 20 times, but the travel plan says that nothing can be done to improve the road. Need to be able to adapt to the increased usage.
- Recreation – the monuments weren't set up for recreation. Use sizes limit families from using the monument. The original plan doesn't work for how things have changed over the last 20 years. Recreation Management Zones will help focus recreation needs.
- Can't neglect and protect as opposed to active management. Alternative D is the only alternative that comes close to what is needed but still needs some tweaks.
- Stressed the importance of adaptability in the plan – need to be able to adjust when things change.

### **Overview of BLM Recreation Business Plans and Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act**

**Presenter: Matt Blocker**

#### **Objectives of FLREA:**

- Fees are appropriate with benefits and services provided
- Compare similar fees
- Fosters public involvement
- Keeps fees in the local communities
- Majority of fees reinvested back into the site

- FLREA has been extended through 2020

Visitation at BLM Utah's recreation sites has increased dramatically.

The BLM is seeking approval from the RAC for the business plans and the fee proposals connected with each plan. Fees cannot be charged when no amenities are provided.

The public must have the opportunity to provide input before new fees are established. A notice must be published in the *Federal Register* for six months before establishing a new fee site.

Recommendations must be approved by a majority of the RAC and they must determine that general public support has been documented.

Field offices look at overall recreation in Resource Management Plans. As funds become available, NEPA is conducted to consider new development. Funding needs to be available for any new proposed development.

Public comment:

- The BLM wants to hear public concerns and determine how to address them.
- The BLM reads every single comment and sorts based on content – some comments are only about the process, not the plans. Public comments are incorporated where possible. NEPA will be conducted when developing new recreation sites.
- BLM holds a 30-day comment period on business plans.
- Two public comment periods were conducted
- 122 public comments were received during the first comment period

### **Cedar Mesa Recreation Business Plan**

Presenter: Amber Johnson

The Cedar Mesa Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) is 407,098 acres in size. Visitation in this area has seen a sharp rise in day use since 2017. Use has also increased in the off season. The fees for this area have remained the same since 1999.

The goal of this proposal is to simplify the fee structure, increase fees to adjust for inflation and support improved visitor services.

### **Proposal**

- Increase Cedar Mesa day use fee from \$2 per person per day to \$5 per person per day
- Increase week-long pass for day use from \$5 per person per week to \$10 per person per week
- Increase annual pass vehicle hangtag from \$20 per vehicle per year to \$40 per vehicle per year
- Eliminate variable fee "seasons" for overnight backpacking trips to Cedar Mesa canyons
- Backpacking fee would increase from \$8 per person per trip in the on-season and \$5 per person per trip in the off-season to \$15 per person per trip year-round
- Implement the allocated permit system at Moonhouse year-round

- Manage Butler Wash as part of the existing Cedar Mesa permit system

The five-year average total expenditures for this area is \$600,263. Fees are needed to help cover costs. The Field Office wants to hire additional staff to provide better and more frequent interpretive contacts and enhance infrastructure.

**Public comments:**

- San Juan County – generally understands the need
- Friends of Cedar Mesa – supportive
- Western Slope No Fee Coalition – expressed general disagreement with fees on public lands
- Field Office staff engaged with the County and Bears Ears Monument Advisory Committee

**Richfield Business Plan**

Presenter: Graydon Bascom

**Proposal**

- Saul's Meadow Campground \$10 per night
- Beas Lewis Campground \$15 per night
- Summerville Campground \$15 per night
- Saul's Meadow Group Site \$65 per night

Recreation staff coordinated with towns, Counties, business owners, State of Utah, tourists, and local residents.

Last year total fees collections \$5,046. Visitation is steadily increasing.

**June 18 Public Comment Period**

**Tom Dillon – Kanab**

- Look at public input from previous meetings to allow the public to talk about the plans for the area.
- New Zealand faces the same recreation issues – some sites have higher fees, some areas have voluntary fees. Need to invest in infrastructure. Management issues are not unique to this area. Visitation will continue to increase and we need to plan for future growth.
- There will be a continued problem of human waste management – in New Zealand you must have a certified self-contained vehicle. Need to incorporate wag bag culture to reduce human impacts.

**Nicole Croft - GSENM Partners**

- Advised the BLM not to push the GSENM plan through as this plan provides the least amount of protection and is most likely to increase the potential for user conflicts.
- This plan will not adequately protect the land.
- Utahns don't support the reduction of the Monument.



**James Bermant - Kanab**

- Antiquities Act calls for designating the smallest area needed to protect objects.
- Supports the Monument reduction and feels that lawsuits against the Monument reduction will fail.
- A plan should be in place to execute the Presidential order.
- Closed roads should be opened immediately.
- Mines are having very little impact on the land.
- Timber – many acres have burned. We need manage timber to reduce the chance of wildfires.

**Michelle Galeria - Kanab**

- Disappointed to hear that the RAC needs to make recommendations on the plan so quickly and that the focus on just on Alternative D.
- Encouraged the RAC to reject Alternative D.
- The majority of Utah opposed reduction of monument.
- Selecting Alternative D misrepresents the public.

**Rich Csenge – Amazing Earthfest Coordinator**

- Rich has coordinated Amazing Earthfest for the last 13 years. This event provides 25 to 40 activities in a single week.
- He has worked with GSENM to raise awareness of public lands.
- Tries to encourage cooperation and recognition among federal, State, and local organizations to produce a public benefit on public lands that we all enjoy.
- Kane County has increased its focus on America's public lands as a central and guiding force for a perpetual economy.
- Encouraged the RAC to recognize that Alternative D is the least supportive of conservation and asked the members not to support it.
- As resources degrade, the public will recognize it and be less attracted to the area.

**Shea Owens – Public Lands Policy Coordination Office**

- Counties support the business plans.
- Non-use and restriction does not equate to protection. Land use does not equate to destruction.
- Supports Alternative D because it provides the ability to adapt.
- With Alternative B, hands are tied without doing a plan amendment.
- Just because a management option is available, doesn't mean it has to be used. This needs to be stated in the final EIS.
- Alternative D is the best alternative because it allows for adaptability.

**Phil Hanceford – The Wilderness Society**

- The newly-passed Dingle Act is important for Utah. Planning for this should come before Monument planning.
- Don't rush plans for the Monument while there is litigation happening.
- Advocates for additional funding to come with new designations such as National Monuments and National Conservation Areas.

All written comments received prior to the meeting were provided to each RAC member.

#### **RAC Discussion – Select a Chairperson and Plan Next Meeting**

Nominations were submitted for Troy Forrest and Chad Baker to serve as chairperson. The group voted by ballot and selected Troy Forrest as the new chairperson and Chad Baker as the Vice Chairperson.

Next Utah RAC meeting:

Meeting on October 29-30 in Green River. Potential meeting locations - John Wesley Powell Museum or Green River City Hall. Potential Agenda Items – Dingle Act, travel management plans, and Monument management plan updates.

Potential future meetings:

February/March 2020 – St. George

May/June 2020 – Little Sahara Recreation Area

#### **RAC Discussion – Business Plans**

Butcher – substance vs. volume on public comments – don't want to devalue comments that are similar in nature. Appreciates that fees are tied to site improvement.

Baker – Are appropriated funds reduced because of fees? No

Draney - Accessibility – are all BLM campgrounds accessible? Yes. All toilets and a certain percentage of the campground need to be accessible. Trails need to be accessible as well.

Koontz – Conducted outreach with his OHV constituents and received general support from the group. He feels that the fee increase is justified

#### **Cedar Mesa Business Plan**

Joan Hayes – asked about \$40 for an annual pass vs. \$35 that State Parks charges.

Troy Forrest – is camping on the mesa top free? Yes. Moon House – demand-based approach?

Allocations in the plan will help with this.

Richard Draney – Is there guidance on when fees can be increased? It is re-evaluated every 10 years or more often if needed.

Clif Koontz – Is it possible to tie fees to CPI? Not at this time.

Bill Cox – For per person fees, is there a minimum age? FLREA prohibits charging anyone under age 16.

Tyler Thompson made a motion that adequate public outreach was conducted on this plan. Ralph Bohn seconded the motion. The RAC approved the motion.

Rick Draney made a motion to approve the Cedar Mesa Business Plan. Bill Cox seconded the motion. The RAC approved the motion.

#### **Richfield Business Plan**

Bill Cox made a motion that adequate public outreach was conducted on this plan. Frank White seconded the motion. The RAC approved the motion.

Clif Koontz made a motion to approve the Richfield Business Plan. Callie Butcher seconded the motion. The RAC approved the motion.

### **GSENM Plan Recommendations from the Utah RAC**

- The current travel plan is problematic and the agency should not delay development of a Travel Management Plan (TMP) after the Resource Management Plans (RMP) are completed. In addition, provide a target date for completion in the RMPs, such as 3-years from the date of the 2017 Proclamation. Some expressed concern about specifying a time frame, but most supported expediting the development of a TMP after the RMP is completed.
- The RAC generally supports having the full suite of tools for vegetation management (including chaining) available to the agency in both KEPA and GSENM, as presented in Alternative D. Some suggested not allowing green tree chaining in GSENM (e.g. not chaining in Phase III P/J), but that suggestion was ultimately withdrawn.
- Do not tie management actions or compliance measures to Ecological Site Descriptions (ESD) in the plans. The BLM could consider the use of cover class (e.g. percent bare soil, composition, etc.) in management action 1055 to ensure proper soil stabilization for reclamation projects. The BLM should consider using exclosures as a form of monitoring (e.g. establishing study plots) as a baseline for compliance measures instead of ESDs.
- Reword, revise, or remove the language in management action #1060 that states the agency would not authorize water developments that will increase livestock numbers.
- For the Little Desert RMZ, make clearer the objectives for the OHV play area. In addition, members do not think the entire area should be OHV open. Instead, the agency should adopt Alternative C for Little Desert RMZ where it provides for a smaller open area with the rest being limited to designated routes. Alternatively, the agency could identify the entire area as OHV limited and designate a high density of routes that provide a challenge to users.
- Make clearer when and how best management practices, exceptions, waivers, and modifications would be applied.
- Make clear what issues or problems we are trying to resolve with the proposed management actions.
- In the analysis, the BLM should disclose the impacts from management actions, but also disclose management opportunities and flexibility provided under Alternative D; there are potential benefits for having increased management flexibility at the site-specific level.
- The proposed plans need to maintain management flexibility, but also be specific enough to protect resources.
- Some RAC members requested more time to review plans and EIS. Others expressed support for the expedited planning process, and felt it was possible to write a reasoned analysis in the timeframe; more time does not equate to better NEPA. In addition, members expressed appreciation for ongoing coordination with state entities and the counties. Members recognized that the BLM should continue to use their guidelines to manage the land and do their job, and that if no one person or group is getting everything they want (i.e. everyone is unhappy to an extent), then everyone has compromised something for the sake of multiple use, sustained yield. They look forward to subsequent opportunities for the public, RAC and others to provide input on site-specific decisions.
- Consider applying distances off designated routes for dispersed parking and camping consistent (e.g. 50ft vs. 150ft) with other adjacent land management agencies.

- Related to group size limits, consider applying a total number of people allowed in congested areas, instead of or in addition to individual group sizes.
- For management action 1010, consider Alternative C, which would require a permitting process for collection of Native American traditional use items.

**Motion:**

Bill Cox made a motion that the RAC recommend Alternative D – there was no second, so the motion did not carry.

Ralph Bohn – Made a motion that the RAC recommend Alternative D, subject to the BLM reviewing bullet points above. Michael Small seconded the motion.

**RAC Vote**

Category 1 – 3 yes, 1 no

Category 2 – 3 yes

Category 3 – 4 yes

The motion carried and is going forward to the BLM as a formal recommendation.

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

Troy Forrest, Chairman

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

8/1/2019